The Followers of Reason vindicated.

ESSAY

WHICH

MAY UNITE MEN AND NATIONS,

AND

PROMOTE UNIVERSAL PEACE.

RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED TO

THE LEADING FOLKS OF ALL PARTIES.

Like me as I am, and I will like you as you are, and we will both rise only against bad Actions.

FIRST PART.

Intended as a Proposal and Specimen.

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INTRODUCTION.

WE have lately heard, ſaid, and repeated ſo much for war, and ſo much againſt philoſophers and whole nations, that I am almoſt afraid to declare that my arguments are only grounded in philoſophy and natural reaſon, and are incompatible with our ideas on the elect, predeſtination, or reprobation; I plead for all men and all nations, even for the diſciples of unrevealed nature and the French people. I am not better off on the other preliminary matters with which I muſt entertain my readers, at firſt I muſt caution them againſt the natural enemies of all philoſophical writings; thoſe, who owe their credit only to their gown or their employment, cannot like natural reaſon, their loyalty goes no farther than their emoluments, they muſt find fault ſome where to ſhew their zeal; they take ſuch broad credentials for themſelves, that they can allow others but a narrow path from Earth to Heaven; they cannot defend themſelves, they muſt ſtand up to ſpeak, either for God and Churches, or for Kings and States. For them nothing

can be ſo dreadful as the light of philoſophy, ſhould it make us a little wiſer, we would no longer be the dupes of their Dreams and Viſions; as things are, they move eaſily our arms for their own defence with ſome pompous words either on the cauſe of Heaven, or that of the Country: No wonder if ſome of them ſtart at the Title Page and find it againſt both Church and State. One ſingle queſtion would diſconcert and confound the moſt zealous, let him be aſked if he does ſincerely believe that God can either be in want of his aid, or be in danger of any man's audacity. He would not be leſs embarraſſed in his anſwer, ſhould he be aſked if he thinks really that philoſophy can be ſo eaſily underſtood as to perſuade the multitude againſt a King, who can do no harm to any, and who is naturally the beſt Father and Protector of all.—

Next I muſt ſecure thoſe who may queſtion my abilities for ſo great a taſk, my name would not warrant them, tho' a high Doctor of univerſity and Barriſter in former times, but I can ſay that I am no Party-man, like impartiality above all things, and know the difficulties any pacific language muſt meet with

with, while both Polititians and Preachers are buſy to irritate and inflame our minds, and ſtir up one againſt another; I ſee the walls, bulwarks and mountains, our eloquent ſpeeches and writings have erected between Men and Nations, but I ſee alſo that they are more ſhewy than ſolid; the ſimple and naked truth may yet have power enough to calm and ſoften the animoſity and bitterneſs of both our religious and political diſputes, and diſpoſe all to a cordial union. I will not hide my Heart and Mind behind any authority, nor take away the Reader's time by quotations; he will only find,

Firſt, Simple narrative matters to rectify our miſtaken notions on the character and opinion of both believers and unbelievers, all may ſee and underſtand their Creed and the Trifles by which we are divided; in knowing one another better, reciprocal hatred muſt ſoon give way to benevolence and friendſhip; only we might be aſhamed if we pay attention to the high principles and morals, toleration and moderation of thoſe we call enemies of God, Religion, and ſocial Order.

Secondly, I unmaſk the bad and defend the good, endeavour to change our bitter and troubleſome ſentiments into affectionate

feelings in order to make room in our hearts for reciprocal love and admiration, and ſhew an excuſable ſide of the national Guilt of our Enemy, in order that the voice of Peace might be heard by Juſtice itſelf.

Thirdly, I go from the origin down to the end of all troubles, wars and revolutions, in order that we might foreſee the inſeparable conſequences, and prevent ſimilar horrors and bad actions in all future events.

The concluſion is a perſpective on the moral improvements we muſt gain by the revolutionary experiences of paſt and preſent times, they muſt clear our heart and mind from ſlaviſh prejudices and partial ideas, and bring in univerſal toleration, univerſal peace and univerſal happineſs.

Finally I muſt beg all to excuſe the form; I could not follow a more regular plan; in defending the followers of Reaſon againſt the fanatic believers, I muſt alſo defend the rational believers againſt the fanatic Philoſophers; the Politicians muſt alſo find that their difference is not ſo mighty a matter as to require the keeping up a hoſtile and endleſs oppoſition; every part, Chapter and Article of this Work muſt be for and againſt

againſt all, impartial and liberal to thoughts and opinions, and ſevere only to bad dealings; every where politicks and religion muſt be mixed with philoſophy to clear up and accommodate our diſſentions and diſputes, which are all on miſcellaneous matters; our politicians preach like prieſts, our prieſts reaſon and act like politicians, and our Church and Chapel men are frequently both prieſts and politicians. I do not ſay this as a critic, I approve every one who will judge for himſelf and think on all matters as he chooſes, but I muſt beg he will grant the ſame privilege to others. The French Revolution throws other irregularities in our converſations, the anſwers muſt be a propos, and derange entirely the ordinary method of a book.

For all theſe conſiderations I have prefered a comparative ſubdiviſion, all that may be expected from the Title Page, is ordered in ſuch a manner, that each part might be read ſeparately, and ſerve as a ſpecimen of the whole work.

In the firſt part I unfold the character of the followers of natural reaſon, their principles of toleration, and their political preferences;

ferences; I defend the French philoſophers and all followers of natural reaſon againſt thoſe who will throw on them the impolitic blunders, bad actions and horrors lately committed in France.

This firſt part I offer to the public, ſhould it meet with approbation, another part will follow; but I muſt beg the contented readers to give their orders for it at the Places mentioned at the Title Page, as no more copies will be Printed than are deſired. The matters of that 2d. part will be,

—*I.* On the falſe philoſophers and true cauſes of the French Revolution. *II.* On the bad conſequences of human reaſon too much influenced by fanatical principles, and the bleſſings of ſocial life when politics and religion are both united with natural reaſon. *III.* On the opinion of a follower of reaſon on man, divinity, and the ſource of our moral ideas. *IV.* On the Faith and deeds of both believers and followers of reaſon. *V.* On the origin and end of religious and civil wars, and all Revolutions. *VI.* And laſt on the future golden age of reaſon.—

Character

FIRST PART.

I. *Character of a Follower of Reaſon.*

1. THE followers of reaſon only ſeek in the great book of nature to find out, either divinity or both our natural and ſocial rights and duties; they form their opinions in the ſtudy of nature, and are delighted with the variety in moral as well as natural philoſophy; they like the diverſity of opinions, and would no more deſtroy a belief, either religious or philoſophical, than a ſpecies in vegetable or animal life; they are not ſo blinded by their perſuaſion as to neglect or diſreſpect that of others: tho' they think the philoſophical principles and morals prior and ſuperior to any revelation, they have no objection that we ſhould rather like our traditions and ſcriptures; neither find they fault that we have various interpretations of what we call the word of God; nor do they blame, either the original believers who give credit to all parts, chapters, articles and verſes of their ſacred books; or thoſe who can believe only a part of it. they confeſs Themſelves, that they ſee not all the ſame things in their great book, and are divided in Theiſt, Deiſt, and Atheiſtical Philoſophers, but all have the greateſt veneration for human reaſon; think it the moſt valuable preſent; whether it

it comes from Heaven or Nature itſelf, is no matter of diſpute among them.

2. True Philoſophers love univerſal toleration, and are friends to all rational believers, the good, honeſt and loyal Jew, Mahometan, and Lamaiſt, as well as a ſimilar Chriſtian; they like to ſee in a country a high Church, but they would alſo wiſh they could ſee in it Chapels for all man's different perſuaſions; they prefer the Royal high Church of England for its greater toleration, to the Papal, Patriarchal, Apoſtolic, and evangelical high churches of other countries, but that does not prevent them to like the Romans, Greeks, Lutherans, Calveniſts, Quakers, Unitarians, and all other Chapel followers, as well as the high Church Catholicks: they would alſo prefer, Pagans and Heathens doing well and preaching good actions, to a Chriſtian maſking horrid deeds under the credit of his faith; a man with a ſound heart and mind, without any religion at all, to thoſe Church folks, either high or low, who call their friends enemies of God, when they cannot flatter their ignorance, partiality, and vices; and rather any ſet of perſuaded believers, than thoſe fanitic and uncertain Puritans, who look for precedents in the old Scriptures of Jews, Mahometans and Chriſtians, to juſtify the moſt odious aſſaſſinations and maſſacres, their cold hearts only can enjoy.

3. Beſi-

3. Beſides chapels and churches, they like to ſee in a country private meetings and fraternal ſocieties, both for the lovers of a new Jeruſalem and adepts in ſecrets and myſtical Theologies; but they prefer the Free Maſons who rebuild Solomon's Temple in a Tavern, to the followers of the Swedenborgiſh Society of London, who ſeek for their new ſpiritual Jeruſalem in all Churches and Chapels, tho' they are diſcontented with both; they prefer the Moravians who have built a City according to the Word of God on their own ſpot, to the real new Jeruſalem pretenders of Avignon who mean to carry the Tabernacle of Jehovah in the country of condemned Chriſtians, where they expect a new Moſes will lead them to victory; and they like better the jovial fraternity of the followers of a club, than the chimerical fraternity of the whole human race planed by the moſt learned viſionary.

4. A follower of reaſon would wiſh he could alſo ſee in a country temples of reaſon for the Theiſts, Deiſts and Atheiſts, which would keep in awe both diſſenting believers and freethinkers; the latter could not ſo eaſily hide their corrupted heart under the banner of Philoſophers, it would ſoon be known that they cannot be confounded with any diſciple of nature; they have only falſe notions on philoſophy, and for neglect of their

former principles they go from vices to crimes and become ſlaves to all paſſions, conſequently unworthy of any philoſophical appellation. The former would be obliged to keep more union with the high Chureh, could not ſo indifferently be ſtyled Philoſophers and give credit to their tenets as better according with reaſon: it is true, the more rational believers in Theology are juſtly called Philoſophers when compared with the more ſuperſtitious; ſo was it in former times with the believers in Mythology, ſome proteſted againſt many Gods, Demi-gods, and Heroes, tho' they gave credit to their favourite ones; yet we call only thoſe Philoſophers who would not admit even Saturn and his Sons, Jupiter, Neptune, and Pluto.

5. In ſhort followers of reaſon riſe only againſt fanaticiſm, hypocriſy, impoſture, and bad actions, are wellwiſhers to all who do well, and pay no more attention to the *belief* or *unbelief*, than to the name and colour of the face: union, peace and harmony, is their chief delight; and in theſe critical times they do all they can, to caution the diſcontented parties againſt the ſeducing promiſes of their ambitious leaders, and would if poſſible inſpire all wiſdom to the chiefs and rulers of every nation, in order that men might not fall back as in former times, and loſe once more Science and Virtue.

II. *The*

II. *The French Revolution cannot be the work of Followers of Reaſon.*

1. CAN the followers of reaſon imitate ſuch examples as performed by our Cromwelliſts, can they be guilty of the impolitic blunders and horrors committed in the French Revolution? No, let us confeſs it, we were miſled by men who were perhaps miſtaken themſelves; let the good enjoy a little triumph over the bad; let the French Philoſophers know that we are convinced of our errors, and our ſecret enemies will ſee that we are no longer their dupes.

2. Yes, republicaniſm and equality are not philoſophical but Calviniſt Doctrines; the Philoſopher ſees the unequality of rank in nature as well as in ſociety, and does not think that a pure Democratical State can have any duration; univerſal ſuffrage and equal right muſt ſoon bring in rulers who cut down the tree to get at the fruit.

3. Rouſſeau the libeller of ſocial diſtinctions was not a true Philoſopher, but only an apoſtle of the Huguenots, the inſpirer of all modern Diſſenters, and the moſt fanatic Calviniſt, notwithſtanding his various and frequent abjurations, and like Marat, a very wicked Citizen of Geneva; the few Philoſophers united with the diſguiſed diſciples

of that celebrated man have paid their miſtake very dear.

4. The Rights of Man cannot be attributed to a follower of reaſon, philoſophy gives only Rights to Children and Old Age, to the infirm, weak and ſick; and impoſes heavy duties on all men.

5. The moſt unchriſtianlike ariſtocracy which ſucceeded the moſt chriſtian monarchy was the work of bankers; the Philoſophers would have prefered the juſt and generous Mahometan deſpotiſm of the Turks.

6. And the gloomy and ſtern Republican Synod was brought in by fanatic diſciples of the Calviniſt, Romantic and too eloquent Rouſſeau; no follower of reaſon has, or ever will approve, either the life of the apoſtle and inſpirer, or the horrid deeds of his diſciples.

7. With regard to the viſionaries and bad men who follow all ſtages of a Revolution, every body muſt know that they cannot be called followers of reaſon; moſt of them have their heart and mind corrupted by lewdneſs and debauchery, they ſtyle themſelves Deiſts, Theiſts, or Atheiſts, to impoſe on the multitude, but they have not the principles, morals, honour and ſentiments of any diſciple of nature. The others tho' of a better character are diſcontented with all we know both from religion and philoſophy, liſten to the voice

of

of their ſpirits, and run after confuſions to find out, either the road which leads to a new Jeruſalem, or the philoſopher's ſtone, univerſal medicine, and their beloved chimerical fraternity.

8. The followers of reaſon could not, and have never preached againſt royalty, according to philoſophy a nation cannot come to power and glory without being led for Centuries by a vaſt number of great men, who know how to create, diſcern, attract, and encourage genius and all kinds of abilities; therefore they think that a Monarch can worthily repreſent a civilized and enlightened nation, and its former benefactors. They never would have adviſed the King to derogate from the religion of the country or the Majeſty of the Throne; they do not deny that both ſpiritual and temporal powers may be uſeful to give a ſanction to the laws, and to keep the people in order and ſubordination: but they wiſhed alſo that the French Kings and their Miniſters had never departed from the principles of philoſophy, government ought to protect the *belief* of all, even that of the Atheiſts; for, tho' we can bend our will and obey the laws, we cannot do ſo with our opinion; it is the reſult of perſuaſion, which cannot be ordered, nor prohibited, either in the name of God, the King, or the Law.

9. They

9. They could not have demanded for a new conſtitution, the Philoſopher ſees a political body in the ſame light as a natural one, both come to maturity by a ſecret influence of nature; once grown, we can preſerve, ſtrengthen and improve our conſtitution, by prudence and good regimen: but it is only a quack who promiſes a new conſtitution to the weak, attacks life itſelf by his operations, and brings to an end in one year a ſtructure which would have held out ſixty, without his pills.

10. They cannot be accuſed to have aimed at the chimerical Republic of Plato; their cenſures were always accompanied with praiſes on better regulated churches and ſtates; condemning the perſecutions of the Gallican Church, they recommended the great toleration of the high Church of England; finding fault with the frequent embarraſſments cauſed in ſtate affairs by the Miniſters of the Altar, they admired the ſublime Government of the great Frederic, which protects all religions, and is influenced by none. Blaming the ſuperiors and rulers for their neglect or irreverent behaviour in religious ceremonies, they exalted the wiſdom of the diſciples of Confucius, who attend with reſpect all Pagodas, although they do not believe the dogmas of any.

11. No more can we ſuſpect, that they

are

are the friends of anarchy and diſorder, philoſophy is repugnant to unlimited liberty as well as arbitrary power, they have always ſpoken as loud againſt the democratical outrages, as the monarchical and ariſtocratical vexations.

12. Here I muſt take leave of the French Philoſophers, if ſomething remains ſtill undefended againſt them, it is ſo with all others, both thoſe who have honoured the former ages and will ſhine in future times, as well as thoſe who may now be found in other countries; none will ever admire all our religious and political maxims. A Philoſopher thinks that we could gain more in uniting men, than in dividing them, and that the good ſhould not be the loſer in this world; he does not wiſh to do any thing that may injure another, yet he cannot agree, that a bad and idle man ſhould be authoriſed to believe that he has ſome claim on a good heart.

END OF THE FIRST PART,

Intended as a Propoſal and Specimen.

The Subſcription of the whole Work is 2s. 6d.

The readers, who wiſh to encourage this Work and its Author, are requeſted to give their Names and Orders at any of the Bookſellers mentioned in the Title Page, or at No. 36, *High Street, near Devonſhire Street, Mary-le-bone.*

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